

論文

Employment Status of Dietitians/Registered Dietitians and Education Methods of their Training Institutions

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Introduction

In July 2012, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) announced 'Healthy Japan 21' (the second)¹⁾ to extend healthy lifespans and reduce health inequalities. It came into effect in April 2013 and is intended to be a fundamental tool to promote Japanese health. In Japan, the population of people aged 65 years and above reached 25% of the total population in 2014 and will continue to increase. As a basic element of this fundamental tool, the MHLW considered health-related lifestyle changes including to nutrition, eating habits, and exercise to be important. This was led to the additional specification of 'nutrition education for the disabled' to registered dietitians' duties in 2004. In 2007, a nutrition management addition was introduced to reduce the enormous growth in healthcare costs through the Act for Partial Revision of Long-Term Care Insurance. Concurrently, it was recommended that the elderly receive treatment or caregiving at home. In addition, appropriate nutritional management was recommended. In other words, the role of dietitians/registered dietitians in Japanese society has become more important than previously.

However, exacerbated economic conditions from the late 1980s to recent years have led to changes in various labor circumstances. It is rare now to use terms such as lifetime employment. As a result, early job change/separation by young people has increased. Shortened duration of

employment among young people is a problem found in all jobs and job situations and is also a problem of the entire young generation currently. However, reduced the stability rates in dietitians/registered dietitians may result in difficulties in providing good nutritional care over the long term. In brief, it may lead to difficulties in lifestyle improvements such as nutrition and eating habits. Such improvements are a basic element required for healthy lifespan extension and health inequality reduction advocated by the MHLW. As education institutions and educators of dietitians/registered dietitians, we thought that it might be necessary to determine background issues and examine supportive measures if employment duration shortens for dietitians/registered dietitians similarly to other jobs.

I Examination of previous studies

1. Duties of dietitian/registered dietitian

Results of 2010 and 2011 surveys by the medical professional association for dietitians²⁾ indicated that the nutrition services of clinical institutions shifted from desk work to medical practice and the number of registered dietitians under hospital direct control has increased¹⁰⁾. The number of institutions in which additional nutritional management was implemented also increased. Furthermore, there were an increased percentage of registered dietitians participating in team planning approaches in medical care.

Giving nutritional management serious consideration as a national medical measure was thought to cause this increase. However, outsourced meal delivery services have increased annually. The reason that outsourcers were accepted was often 'low price'. It was suggested that we should monitor this closely to prevent reducing the meal quality in hospitals as a part of medical care because economic reasons were prioritized.

Nutrition education was commonly provided by approximately two registered dietitians with at least three years' experience and a nutrition education manual was kept in many institutions. In other words, they are commonly in charge of duties other than nutrition education within three years after graduating from a training institution. Taking account of current early job change/separation, it was more likely that they changed workplaces to other institutions or changed to other types of jobs before they experienced nutrition education duties.

The most common participation in team planning approaches in medical care was for pressure sore measures. Approximately half of the institutions participated in a Nutrition Support Team (NST). No factors preventing registered dietitians from inhibiting NST planning participation were found in this study. Nutrition education and dietary intervention at discharge for the late-stage elderly were provided in approximately 30% of the study institutions. Nutrition education and dietary interventions in home visits for home care patients were provided in approximately 1,000 patients/year nationwide³⁾. Based on these results, it was difficult to conclude that the purposes of introducing the nutrition management system were sufficiently achieved.

2 . Abilities dietitians/registered dietitians consider necessary

Omiya et al.⁴⁾ reported that most dietitians serving in 'sales', 'development', or 'sales and marketing' in companies thought that 'communicative competence' and 'ability to understand and explain nutrition/health-related special expertise' were important and required for their duties. Ohara⁵⁾ summarized the changes in life-long education content provided by the Japan Dietetic Association. In addition to human services courses such as 'Clinical Nutrition', 'Applied Dietetics', 'Community Nutrition', and 'Nutrition and Food Service Management', recent curricula must include balanced comprehensive courses other than dietetics such as 'Statistics', 'How to Professional Writing', 'Personal Computing', 'Ethics', and 'Literature Review'.

Nagai et al.⁶⁾ reported differences in registered dietitians' awareness of strengths and weaknesses depending on the differences in courses taken after the curriculum was modified in 2002. In comparison to the registered dietitians who took the courses in the new curriculum after 2002, the registered dietitians who took the courses in the curriculum before 2001 showed higher study motivation or attitude; they acquired significant knowledge of clinical practice guidelines and relevant laws and regulations but were unsure of behavioral science theory and research studies. Based on these results, registered dietitians who graduated from school 10 or more years ago had higher working or study motivation but found it difficult to obtain knowledge of research studies and behavioral science theory.

3. Differences from the curricula of registered

dietitian training institutions in foreign countries

Studies by Kasaoka et al.⁷⁾ and Suzuki et al.⁸⁾ found that the largest difference in curricula for registered dietitians between Japan and other countries was the training period. Specifically, the number of off-campus field training hours was markedly higher in the U.S. (1,200 hours or more), Canada (1,800 hours or more), the U.K. (1,040 hours or more), and Australia (800 hours or more) than in Japan (180 hours or more). In the U.S. and Canada, such field training was provided as a postgraduate internship system. In Australia, new dietitians must obtain approval of the trainer and apply for promotion of the renewed their license within two years.

In comparison to other countries, many people have acquired the dietitian/registered dietitian license in Japan. It appears that the qualification of dietitian/registered dietitian is easily acquired in Japan compared to other countries. In addition, in Japan, quite a few people do not work as specialists using the qualifications they acquired. This fact indicates a unique employment pattern for dietitians/registered dietitians in Japan different from that in other countries. However, Japan is a country where the percentage of population with nutritional knowledge is higher, if many dietitian's specialist⁹⁾. Actually, the percentage of people with nutritional knowledge necessary for daily life is higher in Japan. This may be the reason that Japan has been the country with the world's best longevity for several years.

Thus, for the workplace environment for dietitians/registered dietitians, there are issues including employment terms such as pay and paid vacation; in many institutions, it takes approximately three years before they are able to engage in the duties for which they were trained. Unless measures such as specific goal

presentation are taken during this period, early job change/separation in young dietitians/registered dietitians might remain difficult to prevent in the future.

In addition, dietitians/registered dietitians with 10 or more years' experience showed motivation and attitude for self-improvement but rarely had confidence in themselves in comparison to people engaging in other jobs. Abilities in which they lacked confidence included not only special expertise but also communicative competence and research study methods required to justify their duties to others; the abilities required varied by generation. Naturally, this problem should be examined by training institutions during the training period and even postgraduate education.

The literature revealed that these problems might occur in active dietitians/registered dietitians. We decided to conduct a survey to examine the appropriate education to be provided by training institutions if these problems exist.

II Purposes of the survey

- (1) To determine the actual employment status including the periods in workplaces and the reasons for job change/separation in dietitians/registered dietitians.
- (2) To know the training, education contents, and education systems for dietitians/registered dietitians in their institutions.
- (3) To examine better education methods provided in training institutions including postgraduate education for dietitians/registered dietitians.

III Survey method

1. After literature review, we conducted a

preliminary interview in order to frame the investigation and derive the question items. The participants were three active dietitians/registered dietitians who worked in a public health center, a nursing facility, and an outsourced company for 30 years or more. The survey period was December 2013 and January 2014.

2. Based on the interview, the question items were derived. The questionnaire was designed and conducted as a self-administered questionnaire survey by mail. The participants were 23 individuals living in a metropolitan area of Kagoshima prefecture. The survey period was January and February 2014.

IV Survey results

1. Interview results

- (1) Actual employment status including the periods in workplaces and the reasons for job change/separation in dietitians/registered dietitians

Regardless of job type, the periods in workplaces and the presence of and reasons for job change/separation were associated with the presence of a mentor for each dietitian/registered dietitian. Regardless of the period in the workplace, deep understanding of their duties at the time of entrance to a training institution was associated with their later sense of accomplishment of their duties. In addition, departure due to lack of knowledge, lack of experience, and their awareness of weaknesses was suggested.

- (2) Training, education contents, and education systems for dietitians/registered dietitians in their institutions

Their awareness of lack of knowledge and experience affected planning and cooperation with specialists of other occupations as a part of their job. Furthermore, it was difficult to reserve time and budget for training opportunities even if they wanted to obtain them.

- (3) Better education methods provided in training institutions including postgraduate education for dietitians/registered dietitians

More than half of the dietitians/registered

dietitians with of 10 or more years' experience abandoned the hope of entrance into postgraduate education owing to difficulties in the compatibility of current duties and study. It was also found that not only training for new graduates but also a re-education system for dietitians/registered dietitians who worked currently or who wanted to work again was needed. To improve the dietitian/registered dietitian specialty, outsourcing business control of food service has spread. As a result, however, it may cause diminished meal quality as a part of treatment.

2. Questionnaire results

The participants' characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Ten participants were dietitians at graduation and acquired the license of registered dietitian later. Therefore, all participants were registered dietitians at the time of survey.

Their dietary awareness and meal history are shown in Table 2. All participants ate breakfast. Most of them cooked meals currently. Half of them cooked three meals a day.

Approximately 80% of them helped to prepare meals in childhood.

For motivation for occupational choice, 87% of the participants responded that it was their own choice. The detailed motivations were as follows: 'I wanted to acquire a manual skill'; 'I met a registered dietitian'; and 'I was interested in meals'.

History of job change/separations is shown in Table 3.

The first workplace periods and assignments after graduation are shown in Figure 1.

The first assignment after graduating from school included hospitals (39%) and institutions for the elderly (22%). For the periods by workplace, the institutions for the elderly showed the longest periods (5.5 years). The participants who responded they were 'satisfied with duties' in the first workplace accounted for 82%. The reasons were as follows: 'I was entrusted with responsible missions'; 'I could experience various work'; 'I acquired knowledge'; and 'It was good for me to work in a place where I could meet the clients directly'.

The periods in workplaces by the number of job separations are shown in Figure 2

For periods in workplaces, the times from school graduation to first job separation were as follows: under 1–2 years, 5 participants (22%); under 3 years, 10 participants (44%); under 5 years, 15 participants (66%). Since the total years of their job histories were under 10–30 years, the periods in workplaces prior to the third job separation was 2–10 years or long term (to the present). The period in workplaces prior to the fourth job separation was as short as 1–2 years.

The reasons for job separation included training, home-related circumstances such as marriage or childbirth, and troubles associated

with the company such as outsourcing or contracts. There were many reasons related to promotion rather than to the previous job.

Those participants with advisers after graduating from school and just after getting a job were shown in Figures 3 and 4.

For the period after graduating from school and in the workplace, the most common adviser for each dietitian/registered dietitian were friends from the same school (74%), followed by friends with the same job (39%), senior friends from the same school (30%), and teachers from school (17%).

In rankings of necessary duties for dietitians/registered dietitians, most participants were conscious of their lack of knowledge and experience. In particular, the most common abilities necessary for their duties included 'Listening closely and understanding'; 'Communicative competence'; and 'Medical knowledge'. They supplemented their abilities via books (87%) and the Internet (74%).

Figure 5 shows the social associations of dietitians/registered dietitians and other occupations to which they are related.

For social associations of dietitians/registered dietitians and other occupations to which they were related, dietitians/registered dietitians identified duties as follows: 'Communication'; 'Mutual trust/human relationships'; 'Establishment of the position'; 'Presence'; 'Information provision'; 'Appeal'; 'Sense of cooperation/flexibility'; and 'Expansion of the job area'.

V Discussion

The preliminary investigation and questionnaire survey suggested the following:

(1) Since the participants were dietitians at graduation and acquired the registered dietitian

license later, the registered dietitian license seems to be required for beginning work over the long term.

(2) The persons serving as dietitians/registered dietitians practiced their own dietary management. Persons who engage in nutrition duties should always be able to maintain their own health regarding meals.

(3) Persons who choose dietitian/registered dietitian jobs and work currently tend to have a higher interest in meals from childhood, which is essential for a person engaged in nutrition duties.

(4) Considering that most of the participants experienced job changes 1–5 times and that the periods in workplaces after the second or third job change were 2–10 years, they seemed to be in charge of the duties they preferred after the third job change (or similar lengths of service).

(5) Since the reasons for job separation despite their satisfaction included training and marriage, there were many difficulties in compatibility between their duties, housework, and study.

(6) In the period after graduating from school and in workplaces, the most common adviser for each dietitian/registered dietitian was a friend from the same school (74%), a friend with the same job (39%), a senior friend from the same school (30%), and a teacher from school (17%). Taking account of the presence of the mentor for each dietitian/registered dietitian in the workplace, a connection to old friends and alumnae from the same school is important; to extend the periods in the workplace, it may be helpful to track graduates from the training institution and to reconsider class reunion methods.

(7) The abilities that are necessary in their duties included ‘Listening closely and understanding’; ‘Communicative competence’;

and ‘Medical knowledge’. Taking account of these results, a talented person with social and common sense who listens well to others in their duties is expected. Through review of the education in training institutions and consideration of re-education methods as graduate education, not only training for new graduates but also a re-education system for dietitians/registered dietitians who currently worked or who wanted to work again is necessary.

(8) Though it is essential to cooperate with specialists of other occupations, dietitians/registered dietitians are not good at providing advice to them which seems to be related to their lack of knowledge, experience, and communicative competence. A curriculum to provide not only technical knowledge but also communicative competence and self-culture is necessary for the graduates of training institutions.

VI Conclusion

Since many of the surveyed participants in this study had relatively extended years of experience, comparison with a younger generation will be necessary in the future. Based on the results of this study, we intend to identify new regions and participants for additional surveys and to re-examine the participants soon after having conducted a review of the contents of the questionnaire survey.

To continue providing good nutritional care for the long term, it is essential to raise the settlement rate of excellent dietitians/registered dietitians. To that end, we should continue the improvement of work environments for dietitians/registered dietitians and broader education than the specialties for qualification.

V References

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Table 1 Attributes

Items		Number	%
Gender	Female	23	100
Age group	20's	1	4
	30's	8	35
	40's	4	17
	50's	9	39
	60's	1	4
Current qualifications	Dietitian	0	0
	Registered dietitian	23	100
Finding employment qualification at graduation	Dietitian	10	43
	Registered dietitian	9	39
	Others	4	17

n=23

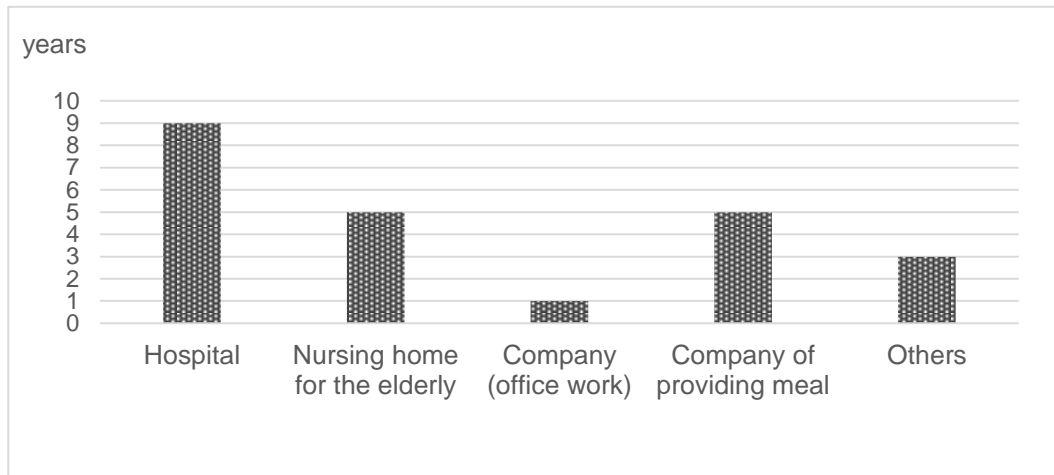


Figure 1 First period in workplace and assignment n=23

Table 2 Awareness and meal history

Items		Number	%	
Current	Presence of breakfast	Yes	23	100
		No	0	0
	Cooking	Yes	22	96
		Three meals a day	11	48
		Every morning and evening	5	22
		Every morning and noon	1	4
		Every morning	1	4
		Every night	3	13
		Unknown	1	4
		No	1	4
Childhood	Presence of help	Yes	18	78
		Cooking	8	35
		Preparation	7	30
		Clean up	3	13
		No	5	22
Motivation for occupation choice	By myself	20	97	
	to wish to acquire a manual skill to interest in meal to see a registered dietitian			
	Recommended by parent	2	9	
	Recommended by teacher	1	4	

n=23

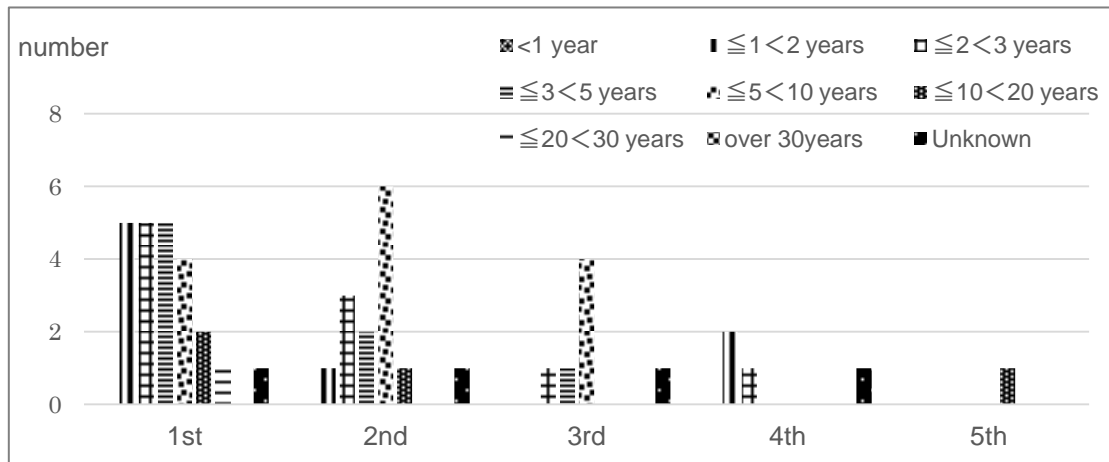


Figure 2 Periods in workplaces by number of job separations

n=23

Table 3 History of job change/separation

Items		Number	%
First period in workplace	<1 year	0	0
	$\le 1 < 2$ years	5	22
	$\le 2 < 3$ years	5	22
	$\le 3 < 5$ years	5	22
	$\le 5 < 10$ years	4	17
	$\le 10 < 20$ years	2	9
	$\le 20 < 30$ years	1	4
	Unknown	1	4
First workplace	Hospital	9	39
	Nursing home for the elderly	5	22
	Company (office work)	1	4
	Company of providing meal	5	22
	Others	3	13
Satisfaction with specialist duties in the first workplace	Very satisfied	7	30
	So-so	12	52
	Not so	2	9
	Others	2	9
Number of job changes	0	1	4
	1	8	35
	2	7	30
	3	3	13
	4	3	13
	5	1	4

n=23

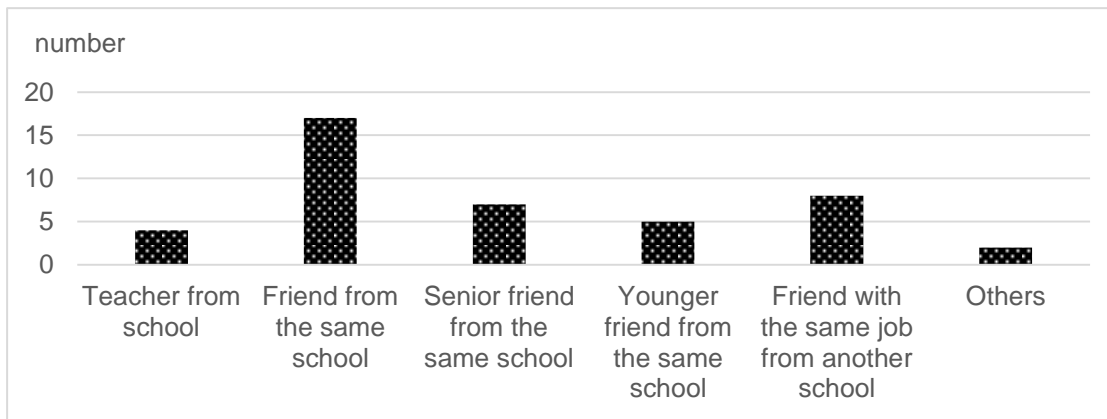


Figure 3 Advisers after graduating from school n=23

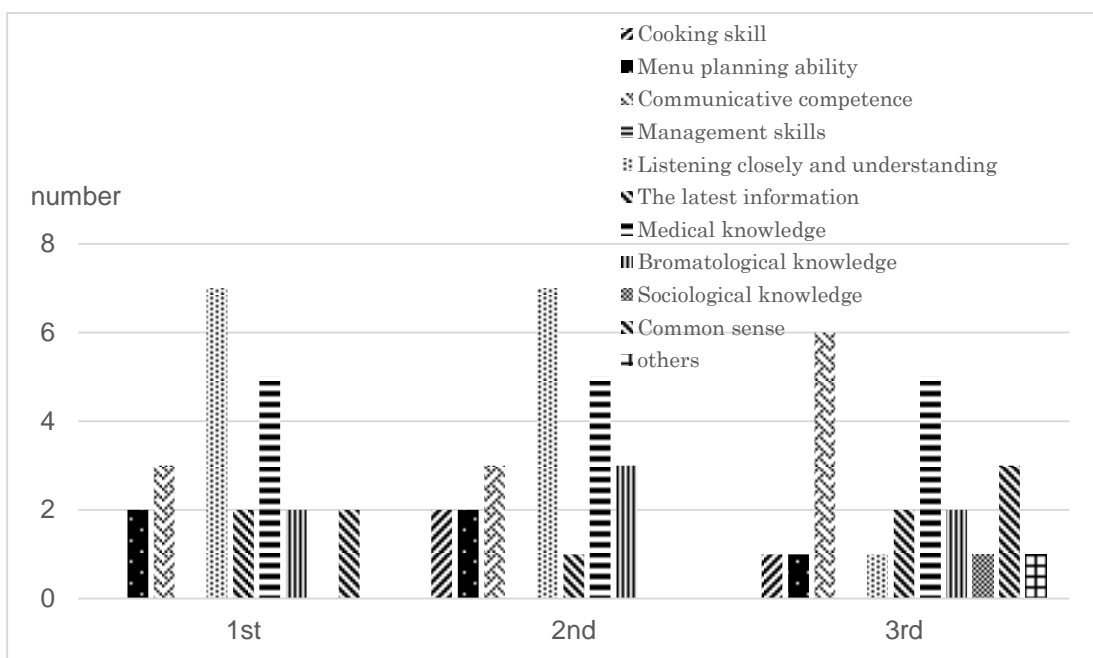


Figure 4 Ranking of necessary duties n=23

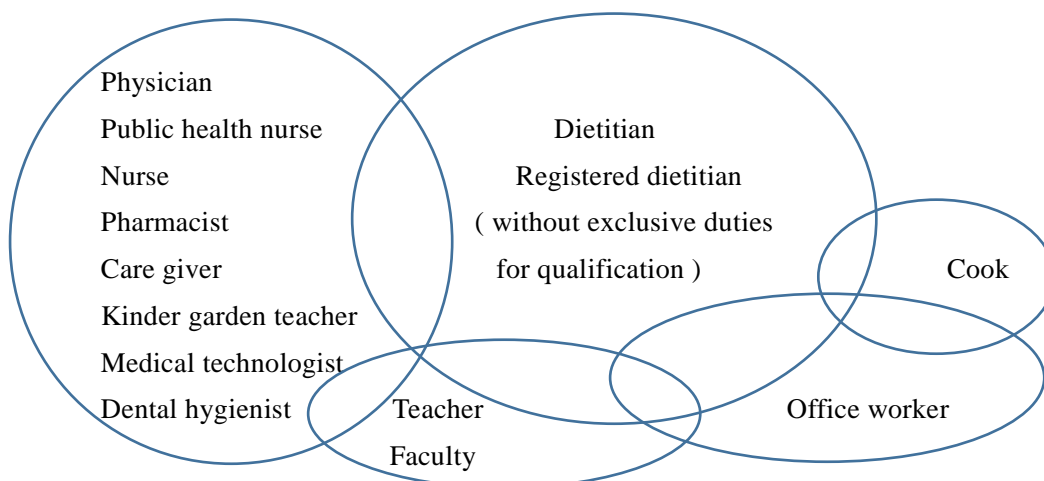


Figure 5 Social associations of dietitians/registered dietitians and other occupations to which they were related